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WHAT'S ON YOUR IPOD?

ALEX PANGMAN

STEVE PAYNE SIX MEDIA MARKETING
Alex Pangman revisits the sad, sweet music of the 1930s.

1. **Sunday** Kay Starr
2. **There'll Be Some Changes Made** The Boswell Sisters
3. **I Got Rhythm** Django Reinhardt
4. **Wild Cat** Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti
5. **St. James Infirmary** Jack Teagarden
6. **On Revival Day (A Rhythmic Spiritual)** Bessie Smith
7. **I'm Alone Because I Love You** The Palmetto Bug Stompers
8. **When a House Is Not a Home** Roger Miller
9. **Women Be Wise (Don't Advertise Your Man)** Sippie Wallace with Bonnie Raitt
10. **La Frontera** Lhasa

Listening to Alex Pangman's album 33, you get the feeling you've gone back in time, stepped out of a 1932 Ford with foot boards into a Depression-era diner, and this music is playing softly on the radio.

It's deliberate, Pangman explains in the liner notes. She was looking for songs that were popular in 1933, to record while she was 33. Among other highly evocative gems, the disc includes two Bing Crosby covers, one of them, I Surrender Dear, sung with her fellow Crosby devotee Ron Sexsmith.

If you connect with the sweet sadness of that era's popular music, you'll want to hear Pangman do these songs live when she sings at Upstairs April 29. But in the meantime, check out some of her iPod favourites to get in the spirit.

Alex Pangman performs April 29 at 8:30 p.m., 10 p.m. and midnight at Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill, 1254 Mackay St. Tickets cost $15 for the first show and $10 for the second. The midnight performance is free. You can reserve by phoning 514-931-6808 or take your chances at the door.)

BERNARD PERUSSE

Find this week's iPod feature on our music page and also get a link to our playlist archive. **montrealgazette.com/music**

THE BIG PICTURE

A selective look at coming shows. A indicates Admission (514-790-1245; www.admission.com); E indicates Evenko (514-790-2525; www.evenko.ca); T indicates Ticketpro (514-790-1111; www.ticketpro.ca) or call the number given or the venue.
*** = new announcement*

APRIL

Tonight and tomorrow. Malajube, La Tulipe. Sold out.
Tomorrow. Rush, Bell Centre, $59 to $145.50. *(E)*
Tomorrow. My Chemical Romance, Metropolis, $32.50. *(A)*
Tomorrow. Sepultura, Club Soda, $29. 514-286-1010; clubsoda.ca.
Tomorrow. Between the Buried and Me, Le National, $22. *(A)*
Tomorrow. Femi Kuti and the Positive Force, L'Astral, $28.50. *(A)*
Thursday. Chubby Checker and the Wildcats, Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts, $52.48 to $65.21. 514-842-2112; pda.qc.ca.
Thursday. Stemns, Le National, $20. *(A)*
Thursday. Charlie Hunter, L'Astral, $24.50. *(A)*
Saturday. Tentemoller, Le National, $22.50. *(A)*
Saturday. Bob Walsh, L'Astral, $24.50. *(A)*
Sunday. James Blunt, Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, Place des Arts. Sold out.
Sunday. Rusko, Metropolis, $30.50. *(A)*
Monday. Lady Gaga, with Semi Precious Weapons, Bell Centre, $63 to $192.50. *(E)*
Monday. Mogwai, Olympia, $25. *(A)*
Monday. Easy Star All-Stars, Cabaret Mile End, $22.50. Date changed from April 24. *(A)*
Monday. Symphony X, Metropolis, $30. *(A)*
April 26. Duran Duran, Le National. Sold out.
April 26. Volbeat, Club Soda, $27. 514-286-1010; clubsoda.ca.
April 26. Rob Lutes and Rob MacDonald (CD launch), Petit Campus, $20. 514-524-9225.
April 26. The Appleseed Cast, Il Motore, $12. www.bluesklestumblack.com
April 27 to 29. Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Corona Theatre. The band also performs May 1 and 2 at the Olympia. All shows are sold out.
April 28. Kylie Minogue, Bell Centre, $63.50 to $138.50. *(E)*
April 28. Federico Aubele, L'Astral, $19.50. *(A)*
April 28. Sam Bradley, Savoy, $15. *(A)*
April 29. Alfa Rococo, La Tulipe, $23. *(A)*
April 29. Uh Huh Her, Le National, $20. *(A)*
April 30. Video Games Live, Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, Place des Arts, $35 to $67.50. 514-842-2112; pda.qc.ca.
April 30. Comfortably Numb – Canada's Pink Floyd Show, Metropolis, $30. *(A)*
April 30. The Kills, Olympia, $22. *(A)*
April 30. Reverend Horton Heat, Le National, $27.50. *(A)*
April 30. Rik Emmett and Dave Dunlop, L'Astral, $43. *(A)*

MAY

May 2. Of Montreal, Le National (New venue, moved from Metropolis), $25. *(A)*
May 4. Bon Jovi, Bell Centre, $31.75 to $152. *(E)*
May 6. Marie-Mai, Bell Centre, $52 to $62. *(E)*
May 7. Rammstein, Bell Centre, $69 to $106. *(E)*
** **May 11.** Dinosaur Bones, Il Motore, $12.50 in advance, $15 at the door. *(A)*
May 27. Maxime Landry, Bell Centre, $52 to $57. *(E)*
** **May 27.** Milow and Brett Dennen, Le National, $27.50 in advance, $30 at the door. *(A)*
May 30. Kid Rock, Bell Centre, $68.75 to $83.75. *(E)*
** **May 31.** Wildbirds & Peace drums, Sala Rossa, $15 in advance, $18 at the door. *(A)*

JUNE

June 3. Roch Voisine, Bell Centre, $57 to $72. *(E)*
June 7 and Aug. 5. New Kids on the Block and Backstreet Boys, Bell Centre, $43 to $103. *(E)*
June 10 and 11. Rihanna, with Cee Lo Green, Bell Centre, $29.75 to $114.25. *(E)*
June 16. Supertramp, Bell Centre, $63.50 to $104. *(E)*
** **June 18.** Art Brut, Il Motore, $15 in advance, $16.50 at the door. *(A)*
June 24. Robert Plant and the Band of Joy, Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, Place des Arts, $69.50 to $99.50. 514-842-2112; pda.qc.ca.
June 30. Sade, with John Legend, Bell Centre, $55.50 to $149.50. *(E)*

JULY

July 2. Katy Perry, Bell Centre, $52.50 to $62.50. *(E)*
July 3. Weezer, with Jack's Mannequin, Bell Centre, $58.50 to $78.50. *(E)*
July 8 and 9. U2, with Interpol, Hippodrome, $30 to $250. *(E)*
** **July 10.** Mark Kozelek, Sala Rossa, $16 in advance, $20 at the door. *(A)*
July 11. The Black Keys, with Cage the Elephant, Bell Centre, $53 to $61. *(E)*
** **July 11.** 100 Monkeys, Sala Rossa, $15. *(A)*
July 14. Taylor Swift, Bell Centre, $47 to $114. *(E)*
** **July 14.** Dirtbombs, Sala Rossa, $10. www.bluesklestumblack.com
July 16. Vans Warped Tour, featuring A Day to Remember, 3OH!3, the Devil Wears Prada and others, Jean Drapeau Park, $49. *(E)*
July 23. Josh Groban, Bell Centre, $94.50 to $114.50. *(E)*
July 23 and 24. Heavy MTL, featuring Kiss, Motörhead, Disturbed, Godsmack, Billy Talent, Opeth and others, Jean Drapeau Park, $83 (single-day general-admission pass) to $202.50 (two-day reserved-seating pass). *(E)*
** **July 25.** Sylvie Vartan, L'Olympia, $39.50 to $54.50. *(A)*
** **July 29 to 31.** Osheaga Music & Arts Festival, featuring Eminem, Elvis Costello, The Flaming Lips, Death Cab For Cutie and others, Jean Drapeau Park. Some passes are on sale now; other passes go on sale April 21. Go to osheaga.com for details. *(E)*

AUGUST

** **Aug. 28.** Matt Costa, Gesù Amphitheatre, $22.50 in advance, $24.50 at the door. *(A)*

SEPTEMBER

** **Sept. 12.** Celtic Thunder, Théâtre St-Denis, $53.50 to $77. *(T)*

NEW MUSIC REVIEWS

Notes from the underground: clever, catchy and comforting

PIERRE OBENDRAUF GAZETTE FILE PHOTO
Julien Mineau (left) with Francis Mineau (centre) and Thomas Augustin of Malajube: fourth album is clamorous, but there's not a wasted note.

Malajube
La Caverne
Dare to Care
★★★★★

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

From the get-go, Malajube's fourth album is so catchy – laden with clever hooks, compelling melodies, upbeat lyrics and dizzying layers of sound – that it's almost obscenely accessible, particularly compared to its more sombre predecessor Labyrinthes. That begs the question: Have they sold out to the almighty god of Mammon? Well, yes and no (and both in a good way). They are, after all, a rock group seeking a wide audience. And, no doubt about it, they're imbued with keen (and oft stimulating off-kilter) intelligence.

This is not as challenging an album as Labyrinthes but, rather, a work that rushes to embrace fans, and perhaps grow their audience.

The 10 songs very quickly become little friends that have insinuated themselves into your life. Clocking in at just under 33 minutes, you have no choice but to press replay to hear more. There's the rub: a danger that familiarity might breed contempt. Then again, when you return to them after a day or two, they're like creature comforts, and our crazy exploding world is righted again. A dose of pure pop is all you need to keep going forward.

A few words here on the pithy approach, in which acts resolutely do not take advantage of a CD's capacity for 80 minutes of music (Radiohead's great new album, The King of Lambs, runs 37 and a half minutes). One might assume that we've returned to the limited-capacity LP era (or somewhere between EP and CD). Maybe less is more in some cases, yet we forget that a masterpiece like Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited stretched out to more than 51 minutes on vinyl. It might've been interesting if La Caverne were appended with different versions of the songs. Still, in the current vernacular, it is what it is – terrific.

That said, La Caverne features an assertively ambitious sound, surging echoey pop-opera (neo-Phil Spector?) mixed with marvellous melodic structures. In this regard, the album is their best effort (their growth is evident listening to all their albums chronologically). The dense sounds of La Caverne are creatively mixed, thanks to their longtime accomplice Ryan Battistuzzi.

Lead singer Julien Mineau does not have a particularly strong voice; it's between a hushed whisper and a cry of joy. Thus it makes sense to blend his voice as part of the total sound (and refer to the booklet for quick lyric assimilation).

The songs deal with various states of devotion, not least to oneself as well true loves and society at large (not to mention a nutty dog).

The lyrics of Sangsues spill out from structures that are like kaleidoscopic prisms. The moody atmosphere of Mon Oeil contains echoes (literally) of Pink Floyd. La Stridor has a psychedelic carnival sound that evolves into something almost symphonic.

The music is imbued with clever, and comforting, chord changes. The sound is clamorous, but there's not a wasted note.

After numerous listenings, I went back to Labyrinthes, which didn't sound so dark – I mean, we're not talking morose Morrissey or Scott Walker here. On hindsight, that album was a route to get to the joyful La Caverne.

Ben Waters
Boogie 4 Stu: A Tribute to Ian Stewart
Eagle Records

Pianist Ian Stewart was the sixth Stone, a founding member who eventually moved behind the scenes and became their road manager. Fittingly, every Rolling Stone still alive shows up to help Waters honour the group's boogie-woogie-loving friend, who died in 1985. The Stones are all over the place, overdubbing parts on a project that became bigger than Waters anticipated. Keith Richards plays guitar on a few songs and trades vocals with Ronnie Wood. Charlie Watts plays drums on most tracks and Mick Jagger and Bill Wyman show up for an all-Stones virtual reunion on a terrific version of Bob Dylan's Watching the River Flow. Everywhere else, it's jump blues, left-hand walking piano lines and spirited duets. One of the most uplifting discs you'll hear this year. ★★★★
Podworthy: Make Me a Pallet On Your Floor

BERNARD PERUSSE

Stefie Shock
La Mécanique de l'amour
Tacca

Stefie Shock has had a difficult time replicating the success of 2003's Le Décor, a largely bouncy album, with occasional moody breaks, that pitted his deadpan yet strangely emotive vocals with quasi-Mariachi horns. In his latest effort, on a new label, the former DJ goes for shimmering, often quirky synth and keyboard sounds, backed by a female chorus, oscillating between clever and sci-fi cheesy. The 31-minute album starts off well with L'amour est pur, l'amour est dur, a pretty good pop wrap-up on love. Sleepless nights are reflected in Un Jour sur deux, while Karma returns to those punchy horns of Le Décor. The title track has Zen-like refrain ("Tu est moi, je suis toi") and nifty percussions. Even the two English songs are weirdly effective, especially Bright Side of the Moon. Above all, it's a fine multi-layered dance album: Welcome back, Stefie! ★★★★
Podworthy: Le Décor

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

- ◐ Not if they paid you
- ★ Don't bother
- ★★ Borrow from a friend
- ★★★ Worth the money
- ★★★★ Wonderful
- ★★★★★ Instant classic

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RODRIGUEZ 'Lyrics mixed within overall sound'

CONTINUED FROM C1

Although the emotionally troubling Labyrinthes was, I think, a better album than the previous Trompe-l'oeil, its sales of 20,000 paled compared to the latter's total of 50,000. Perhaps (illegal) downloading, and the general decline of the recording industry as it was once constructed, had something to do with the free-fall. Mineau has complained that Labyrinthes attracted some teenage "weirdos" who wanted nothing more than to commit suicide. Uh-oh, time to change direction.

At any rate, Mineau decided that Malajube's next album would be more pop-oriented – intelligent but not obscurely ambiguous – ripe for radio airplay that stimulates interest in concerts, which is where the money is these days.

The fact that the vocals are blended into the overall sound – so they're more textural than upfront texts (the case with most French recordings) – makes the group less of a prisoner of their language when it comes to the American market.

"The main reason Malajube was able to get out of Quebec," Cournoyer says, "is because the lyrics are mixed within the overall sound. But there are two sides to that coin: sometimes in Quebec and France we're criticized because they can't hear the words clearly. That's why we chose Ryan (Batistuzzi) for the mix because he understood our approach perfectly."

When I asked him if there was pressure to return with a comeback album, Cournoyer said, "Unconsciously, we always put pressure on ourselves, even if we don't admit it in interviews, so that we can do better than the previous albums. Labyrinthes was a little dark, reflecting what we were going through at the time. This time, from the start, we were looking for something more jovial, like our first album, when we partied and danced. In fact, I see La Caverne is a recapitulation of the three preceding albums."

They started modestly enough. "When Julien made a mini-demo we reacted, like, 'Bof, what's that?' But his strength is that the songs grow on you and they inspired us to add hooks and riffs. There were plenty of overdubs, even if Julien tried to keep it down to two guitars. Even I, who don't have Julien's ears, was surprised by how many background details you can hear on the earphones. They combine to give the album its texture."

The group did two preproductions before going into the studio, "so we knew exactly what we were going to do. Still, once in the studio, we also managed to create two songs we hadn't rehearsed, including La Caverne."

As for reproducing this dense sound on stage, Cournoyer says, "Despite the studio overdubs, I was surprised at how good the songs sounded when just the four of us played them live. There's no need to hire someone else to help us out."

It doesn't hurt to have competition (à la Beatles vs. Stones vs. Kinks) within the fertile Quebec scene. Malajube and Karkwa are the yin and yang of Quebec rock (with Les Breastfeeders as the wild card). While the first two are progressive bands, Malajube piles on the sound in a din of echo and reverb, with a strong guitar sound and cheesy synth quirks, while Karkwa has a more formalistic constructivist prog approach (and Les Breasts meld their love of '60s pop and punk in a neo-grunge style).

As for musical influences, Cournoyer says that they listen to a lot of music and "maybe unconsciously we're inspired. Francis likes music from the '70s and '80s, while Julien doesn't listen to much, but when he finds something he likes he plays it over and over. He's been playing The Kinks for the last six months! As for me, on the francophone side, I like Galaxie's album a lot."

Finally, I asked him what his greatest thrill was playing with Malajube: "My biggest surprise was going to Japan, where the fans knew the songs and sang along in French. I have a hard time understanding how they did that."

Malajube will launch La Caverne with concerts Tuesday and Wednesday at 9 p.m. at La Tulippe, 4530 Papineau St. Both shows are sold out.

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